The Patterson Foundation’s DeSoto Solutions to Actions Newsletter strives to educate and engage. We each have a role in forging a positive future!

Distributing the DeSoto Solutions to Actions Newsletter

On Tuesday, February 20, TPF launched the first-ever edition of the DeSoto Solutions to Actions Newsletter — a temporary title as DeSoto County residents help us rename it. On Friday, February 23, Aspirations to Actions (A2A) team members Sherry Oehler and Cheri Coryea traveled to Arcadia to make the first hardcopy delivery stops at six locations: Casa San Juan Bosco, DeSoto County Library, All Faiths Food Bank, Arcadia Housing Authority, RCMA Child Development Center, and El Charro Mexican Restaurant.

We are thankful to these six organizations for allowing us to pilot our efforts to spread the DeSoto Solutions to Actions Newsletter and foster widespread participation.

DeSoto Solutions to Actions Newsletter Naming Contest

We are extending the deadline for this newsletter naming competition. As a reminder, we would love your help in naming this newsletter. If you haven’t already done so, please submit up to three ideas. For every newsletter idea you submit, your name will be entered into a drawing to win a $500 Pay-It-Forward to a nonprofit or public school in or serving DeSoto County. The new deadline for submission is April 4, 2024. Complete the Survey in English or Spanish here.

Share Your Thoughts - Join a Community Conversation!

The Harwood Institute for Public Innovation has partnered with the Patterson Foundation on a community-driven initiative to catalyze change. From March 17 to 19, we will host a series of community conversations in English and Spanish across DeSoto County.
Please complete this brief survey here if you’d like to receive this newsletter via email in English, Spanish, or both. Additionally, if you are part of an organization in DeSoto County that would like to receive printed copies of the newsletter to distribute, let us know!

Funders Spotlight: United Way Suncoast’s DeSoto Results Showcase

Supporting capacity development is essential to our role as a convener of community-serving organizations. As the United Way serving DeSoto County, we have made sure that our investments are intentionally capitalizing on the strength of its residents. Whether through our Quality Childcare Initiative, which strengthens both individual student outcomes as well as the health and development of childcare providers, or through our programmatic partners to support disaster recovery and long-term financial stability, we are committed to collaborating with our supporters, our grantmaking peers, and our nonprofit partners to increase our collective effectiveness to serve our ALICE families in DeSoto.

The UWS Results Team Program began last year, supporting 17 organizations in Hillsborough and Pinellas County by providing the space, tools, and expertise to focus on achieving greater gains for those they serve. Participants reported measurables such as increased client registration, more effective data collection, and more efficient program designs with a focus on outcomes. Building on the success of this first cohort, UWS selected six community organizations serving DeSoto County to focus on building scale and capitalizing on the Results 1st methodology to expand their impact, resulting in a Results Showcase on March 19th at the Turner Agri-Civic Center in Arcadia, Florida, from 10 am to noon. Register here.

Featured Results Community Partners include Arcadia Rotary Club, DeSoto Cares Homeless Services, DeSoto County Library, Goodwill Industries-Manasota, Inc., Senior Friendship Centers Inc., and Team Arcadia.

Join one of these important conversations to share your thoughts on the community’s strengths and challenges and your hopes for its future. Your perspective is essential to strengthening DeSoto County’s civic culture and helping the community take action on the issues that matter most to residents.

Food and drinks will be provided, and participants will receive a $25 gift card. Sign up and share this information with others in your community!

- 3/17 at 12 pm: First Baptist Church of Fort Ogden
- 3/17 at 1 pm: Saint Mary’s Missionary Baptist Church
- 3/18 at 9 am: Arcadia Garden Club
- 3/18 at 1 pm: DeSoto Library
- 3/18 at 4 pm: Arcadia Housing Authority
- 3/18 at 6 pm: Casa San Juan Bosco (Spanish)
- 3/19 at 5 pm: South Florida State College
- 3/19 at 6 pm: Casa San Juan Bosco (Spanish)

Participate in Our DeSoto County Community Communications Survey

Thank you for your views and opinions on how you learn more about what is going on in your community! We appreciate you taking the time to answer just a few questions. Your assistance will help ensure that you receive accurate and relevant information on topics beneficial to you.

Complete the survey in English here.

Complete the survey in Spanish here.

The Community Foundation of Sarasota County To Host the Giving Challenge

April 9-10, 2024

Ready. Set. Give!
Participate in the DeSoto County Communications Survey

Share your views and opinions on how you learn more about what is going on in your community! We appreciate your taking the time to answer just a few questions.

Complete the Survey in English here. Complete the Survey in Spanish here.

Desoto Catalytic Community Guide Program — Unleashing Community Potential

As a part of The Patterson Foundation’s work with DeSoto County, The Harwood Institute’s Catalytic Community Guide Program in DeSoto County is an intensive week program for community members who desire to guide their community to create lasting change using Harwood’s approach. Catalytic Community Guides are local community leaders trained in the Harwood approach and positioned in the community to help people adopt a mindset and a practice that enables them to step forward, take action, create meaningful change, and unleash the potential of their community. Five DeSoto County community leaders are participating in this transformative 12-week course.

Catalytic Community Guide Spotlight: Ashley Coone

The Community Foundation of Sarasota County will host the Giving Challenge from noon to noon on April 9 and 10. The Giving Challenge is a 24-hour online giving event that supports nonprofit organizations in Sarasota, Manatee, Charlotte, and DeSoto counties.

The most recent Giving Challenge was in 2022 when $16.2 million was raised to support 667 participating charitable organizations. The average gift from the more than 83,000 donations was $121.75. This year, 729 organizations have registered to participate.

A partner since the beginning, The Patterson Foundation will continue to strengthen giving during the 2024 Giving Challenge by providing a 1:1 match for all unique donations, up to $100 per donor, per organization, with no limit on the number of individual matches a nonprofit organization can receive. The Patterson Foundation has contributed more than $30 million to the Giving Challenge since the event’s inception.

At its core, the Giving Challenge emphasizes the ability for every person to be a philanthropist—whatever their means—and donations go directly to the organization that a donor wants to support. The match means donors can double their dollars to their favorite organizations, with the amplified impact boosting participation and enthusiasm. While Giving Challenge results are often reported in dollars raised, the event offers much more than a mere platform and purpose for giving. In the year leading up to the event, participating nonprofit organizations can take advantage of several workshops and trainings, making the event a holistic approach to strengthening capacity.
Ashley Coone is a passionate advocate for children of all ages, especially those from asset-limited families in her hometown of DeSoto County. She is an independent consultant with a wealth of experience in government, education, and nonprofit management. She is also the co-founder and CEO of Links2Success, a nonprofit organization in DeSoto County that provides free college and career readiness programs to middle and high school students.

When asked what she sees as the value of being engaged in the Catalytic Community Guide course, Ashley said, "There are several ways that participating in the CCG Course with the Harwood Institute is valuable to me. It offers me the opportunity to improve how I contribute to my community and more. I'm gaining essential skills in leadership, public facilitation, and conflict resolution that benefit my personal growth and professional life. The course deepens my understanding of community dynamics and boosts my capacity for positive impact. On a professional level, the CCG Course enables me to be a catalyst for change, helping to unite diverse groups and build a more unified community. It is equipping me with the tools to be a more inclusive leader. This course is helping me better understand my role as a catalyst for positive transformation within our community. While I've already worked in a similar role in our community, this course will allow me to work alongside TPF, Harwood, and others by being more catalytic. By utilizing the techniques I'm learning to engage directly with the community, I can be part of a more inclusive

Learn more, give, and discover results by visiting GivingChallenge.org.

Find an Organization to Support in DeSoto County here.

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Suncoast Remake
Learning Days
Saturday, April 20 – May 4

Join us for a festival of multi-site, hands-on learning opportunities! Suncoast Remake Learning Days 2024 will take place from April 20 to May 4 this year, and we hope you will take part in this free opportunity for learning and family fun! Suncoast Remake Learning Days builds on the assets and strengths of our region, reinforcing the knowledge that Learning Happens Everywhere! and affirming that we are working together toward greater outcomes for our children and families. These events will allow youth, families, grandparents, caregivers, and educators to explore creative and fun ways of learning. Build a robot, make an art product, explore the outdoors, learn to code, or 3D print! Attend events at schools, museums, libraries, after-school organizations, childcare centers, tech companies, and more.

DeSoto County Events Calendar: This year, DeSoto County organizations will host more than 70 events that everyone is welcome to attend. Thanks to the generosity of The Patterson Foundation, these multi-generational, hands-on learning experiences will be robust, free, accessible, and open to the public.

Click here to view all the events, their
movement. These techniques are not just focused on problem-solving or temporary fixes. It's about strengthening how we connect with and support each other, creating a model for collaboration and mutual respect. As we build bridges between diverse groups and foster a more cohesive community, the ripple effects of our actions promise a stronger, more resilient Desoto County. My role in this initiative is more than participatory. It's an opportunity to be at the heart of an important journey that redefines what it means to work collectively toward a common good. And for that, I am excited and grateful.

**The Gap: Closing Gaps in Digital Access Across the Suncoast**

Digital access is a basic necessity to connect to vital services such as education, health, and employment, which has increasingly shifted to an online format. It’s more important than ever for community members to connect digitally and participate in modern society. To optimize and amplify impact, The Patterson Foundation is dedicated to bridging The Gap – the ever-widening disparity that exists between individuals and families connected with affordable internet, devices (desktop, laptop, tablet), and digital skills training and those who are not. Our team of trained Digital Navigators connects families and individuals with opportunities to obtain digital connectivity, devices, skills, and support. One-on-one digital navigation assistance is available in person, over the phone, or via email, ensuring accessibility for all.

[Click here if you’d like to meet with a Digital Navigator to explore options for affordable internet, devices, and digital skills support and training in your area.]

If you want to learn more, please call Kiarra Louis at 941-952-1413 Ext. 219 or email klouis@thepattersonfoundation.org

**Could you benefit from Free Income Tax Assistance Through Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA)?**

You don’t need to pay $240 or more for simple tax preparation. IRS-certified volunteers will prepare your taxes. You need to have earned less than $79,000 to be eligible. When you file, you may also qualify for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). In DeSoto, you can visit All Faiths Food Bank at 1021 E Oak Street, Arcadia, 34266, until April 9th, 2024, for assistance. [Schedule an appointment here](#), or call 833-897-8482.

You will need the following documents:
- Federal Photo IDs (If filing jointly, both spouses must be present WITH ID.)
- ORIGINAL Social Security cards
- Your tax identification number
- Forms 1099 received during the year
- Bank statements for the prior year
- A copy of your most recent federal tax return

**A DeSoto County Cohort is Coming!**

A fourth cohort of the Digital Navigator Program will soon launch, focusing on serving community members in DeSoto County! This new class will join over 30 Digital Navigators from the previous three cohorts based in Charlotte, DeSoto, Manatee, and Sarasota counties, who collectively now form the Suncoast Digital Navigator Network. Of the 12,340 households in DeSoto County, approximately 24% reported not having an internet subscription, and...
about 19% reported accessing the internet from a cellular data plan only.

If you are interested in helping the Digital Navigator Program find success in DeSoto County, please fill out this interest form.

If you have received a notice or letter from the IRS, please bring it with you.

Click here to see additional Documents Needed.

You can also attend United Way Suncoast's Tax Action Day on March 30 – 10 a.m.-2 p.m., All Faiths DeSoto Food Resource Center, 1012 E Oak St., Arcadia.

Schedule your appointment here.

THIS BOOK IS COOL!

THIS BOOK IS COOL! is a series of 100 webisodes to encourage a love of reading. It premiered on June 1, 2020, and since then, thousands of children from across the Suncoast region have qualified to receive free books thanks to the generosity of The Patterson Foundation.

The Suncoast Campaign for Grade-Level Reading is excited to welcome back its 10-week THIS BOOK IS COOL! summer reading program. This FREE summer adventure is designed to engage the minds of incoming students in grades PreK–3 and encourage their continued learning through reading.

Participating children receive:

- 20 free books
- An activity guide with activities and word puzzles that correspond to the books
- Regular contact with a Suncoast Campaign for Grade-Level Reading Engagement Team member
- Invitations to family engagement events throughout the summer

SCGLR will distribute books and hand out rewards to qualifying children (grades PreK–3) who are registered and fully participating in THIS BOOK IS COOL! To maintain an active status in THIS BOOK IS COOL!, parents must submit the total number of books their child has read biweekly.

To qualify for THIS BOOK IS COOL!, you must be:

- A resident of Charlotte, DeSoto, Manatee, or Sarasota counties
- Entering PreK-3rd grade
- Enrolled at a Title I school, eligible for free/reduced lunch, or have other demonstrable need

CLICK HERE TO REGISTER IN ENGLISH

CLICK HERE TO REGISTER IN SPANISH
Remember friends, reading is the key to succeeding!

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**Pop Up Neighbor through Laundry Event in Arcadia**

The Suncoast Campaign for Grade-Level Reading (SCGLR) has partnered with The Laundry Project to assist asset-limited families with meeting this basic need – washing clothes and linens, by turning laundromats into community centers of hope. For several hours, at an event we call Pop-Up Neighbor Through Laundry, laundry fees are paid through the generosity of The Patterson Foundation.

On Saturday, February 24, 2024, SCGLR held a Pop-Up Neighbor Through Laundry event at SuperMatt in Arcadia. One hundred fifteen families washed and dried 972 loads of laundry. Pine Level Church and Habitat for Humanity provided volunteers, All Faiths Food Bank provided snack packs, United Way Suncoast had a resource table inside the laundromat, the Suncoast Campaign for Grade-Level Reading offered free books for children, and many community leaders took turns as celebrity readers keeping the children entertained.

Since 2018, the Suncoast Campaign for Grade-Level Reading and The Patterson Foundation have held nine Pop-Up Neighbor Through Laundry events in Arcadia, completing 6,331 loads of wash!

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**Kindergarten Readiness Bags**

The Suncoast Campaign for Grade-Level Reading (SCGLR) recognizes that being ready for kindergarten can make the transition smoother for all children. With the support of The Patterson Foundation and other community partners, Kindergarten Readiness Bags are provided for every rising kindergartner in our four-county area!

SCGLR created Kindergarten Readiness Bags to provide learning support for incoming kindergartners in the months before school begins so that children can start school ready to learn. As families enroll their children for kindergarten, they can pick up their Kindergarten Readiness Bag.

What’s included in these bright yellow magical bags?

- Two packages of flashcards
- Literacy charts
- Magnetic lowercase alphabet letters
- Magnetic uppercase alphabet letters
Drawing paper
Jumbo crayons
Kindergarten Readiness Checklists
An information packet with fun activities for learning
Josh, the Baby Otter book
Magic Postcard – to receive another free book for the home library

We can’t wait to see pictures of your rising Kindergartener having fun learning! Send your pictures to connect@gradelevelreadingsuncoast.net.

Do you have a story or idea to share with the DeSoto County community? Contact AspirationstoActions@thepattersonfoundation.org. Learn more about The Patterson Foundation at thepattersonfoundation.org